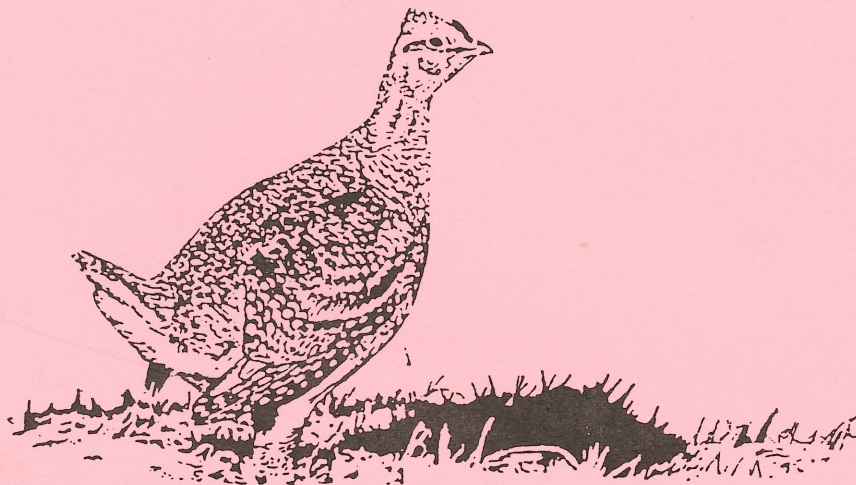


WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Volume 28

Spring, 2000

NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP

The newly formed North American Grouse Partnership recently convened on March 4 in Denver for its first, national, organizational meeting. Concerned over the future of North American Grouse, this international organization is beginning the formation of state and provincial chapters in the U.S. and Canada to address problems in home regions; NAGP National will be investigating avenues for grouse conservation at the federal level in both countries. NAGP will involve people from various interest groups, much like Ducks Unlimited, from all over Canada and the U.S. NAGP is hoping that many Prairie Grouse Technical Council members will want to join the organization and will also encourage their friends to join as well. It is through a united effort by those who care that there is hope for the continued survival of many of our native grouse species. This is truly a chance to give something back. The organization is evolving quickly, and those joining in the year 2000 will be founding members. NAGP will soon be working on a web site, but it is not yet ready. In order to download a membership form so you can join NAGP, please try the following address: www.suttoncenter.org, click on the prairie-chicken picture, click on the bluelined NAGP membership form, click on print.

Wisconsin Sharptail Status, 1999

by Larry Gregg

Abstract

The total number of dancing males on the 9 managed tracts in Wisconsin decreased from 371 in 1998 to 325 this year, indicating that our sharptail breeding population was slightly below the level of the preceding spring. Counts on individual properties revealed that declines were not pervasive, however, with numbers of birds decreasing on some properties while increasing on others. Survey efforts in unmanaged habitats also resulted in locating fewer sharptails in 1999, with a total of 511 birds found this spring compared to 657 last year.

Methods

Sharptail populations on managed properties were monitored by counting displaying males on dancing grounds. Male birds were identified by observations from blinds placed on dancing grounds or with the aid of field glasses after approaching the dancing ground afoot or by vehicle. Complete census of display grounds was attempted on those properties designated as sharptail management tracts (Figure 1).

Sharptail surveys on private lands generally involved selecting one or more blocks of the best available habitat and then conducting listening routes along roads transecting those blocks. Those dancing grounds found within wildland habitat blocks were approached and all birds flushed from each site were counted, no attempt being made to distinguish sexes. The survey is a cooperative effort between DNR, USFS, GLIFWC, members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society and volunteers. Sharptail surveys on unmanaged lands were concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin where large expanses of timberland had been recently cut-over in response to an outbreak of jack pine budworm. These cut-over patches are located in Douglas and Bayfield Counties, primarily in deer management units 2 and 9 (Figure 1). Sharptail surveys were also conducted on county-owned fuelbreaks in Bayfield County, recent clearcuts in Oneida County, and on abandoned/marginal farmlands in Douglas, Bayfield, Rusk and Price Counties.

Results

The 1999 dancing ground survey indicated small to moderate decreases in sharptail numbers on 5 of 9 managed sites, contributing to an overall decline of 12% in comparison to 1998 counts (Table 1). Dancing male counts on both Namekagon Barrens and Pershing Wildlife Area declined substantially this year while numbers dropped off slightly on Crex Meadows and Moquah Barrens. The largest proportional decrease was recorded at Dike Seventeen, but a decline in survey effort may have been responsible for the smaller number of birds seen in this location. Dancing male counts remain above long-term averages in most locations, but the small number of birds on some sites should cause concern about the security of the sharptail flocks in those locations.

Sharptail surveys revealed that good numbers of birds continue to exist within some of the northwestern Wisconsin sites which were clearcut during jack pine budworm salvage operations. Survey efforts by members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society resulted

in a count of 239 birds in deer management units 2 and 9. This count was 33% lower than that obtained during a similar survey operation conducted in 1998, an indication that the habitat quality in this area may be declining. Because the budworm infestation peaked in 1993, most harvested stands have now regenerated or been replanted and will inexorably outgrow their usefulness to sharptails.

Some survey effort was also expended within portions of Douglas, Bayfield, Rusk, Oneida and Price Counties where sharptail habitat still persists on recent clearcuts or brushy farmland. The additional sharptails flushed in these sites brought the total number of birds on unmanaged lands to 511, including 283 in unit 2, 23 in unit 8, 123 in unit 9, 26 in unit 20, 4 in unit 25, 15 in unit 30 and 37 in unit 31. Sharptail habitat exists within several additional units which were not surveyed due to staff and time limitations.

Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands.

Property	Number of Dancing Males								
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Crex Meadows W.A.	126	47	53	59	83	110	117	132	111
Douglas County W.A.	5	4	2	8	12	9	9	18	20
Kimberly Clark W.A.	56	32	20	20	28	20	15	25	40
Moquah Barrens W.M.A.	6	9	6	7	21	14	17	34	40
Namekagon Barrens W.A.	37	25	16	25	44	48	55	74	54
Pershing W.A.	37	34	24	16	26	30	43	34	22
Riley Lake W.M.A.	25	8	5	7	18	17	19	19	27
Wood County W.A.	54	13	11	16	19	18	10	17	18
Dike Seventeen	16	10	9	9	8	7	3	18	3
Total	362	182	146	167	259	273	288	371	325

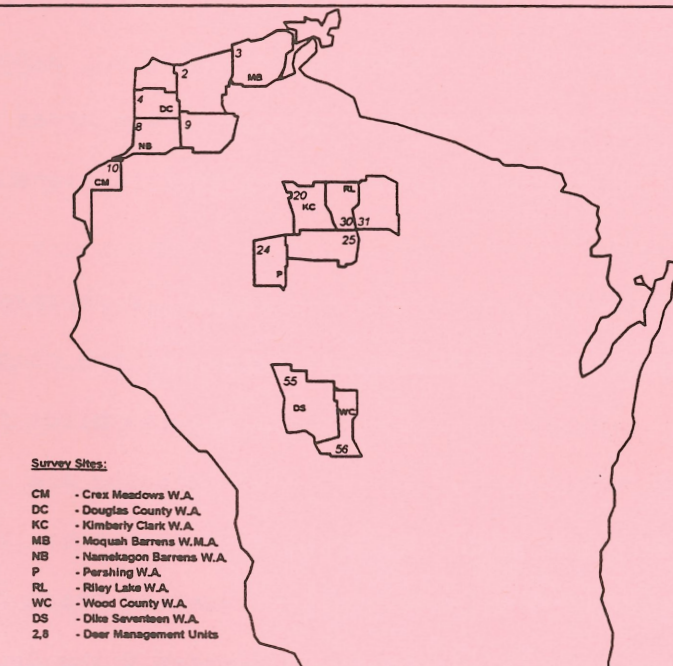


Figure 1. Sharptail survey area, 1999.

WISCONSIN BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

by Jim Evrard

One recent Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (WSGS) project was supporting the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology's (WSO) Breeding Bird Atlas. We donated \$500 to the effort, sponsoring the Sharp-tailed Grouse species. The Atlas is nearing completion so the question might be asked --- What did the WSGS get for its money?

One of the sharptail research/management needs the WSGS Board discussed in recent years was a statewide census of the sharptail breeding population. The Breeding Bird Atlas produced a map showing the confirmed and probable breeding range of sharptails in Wisconsin.

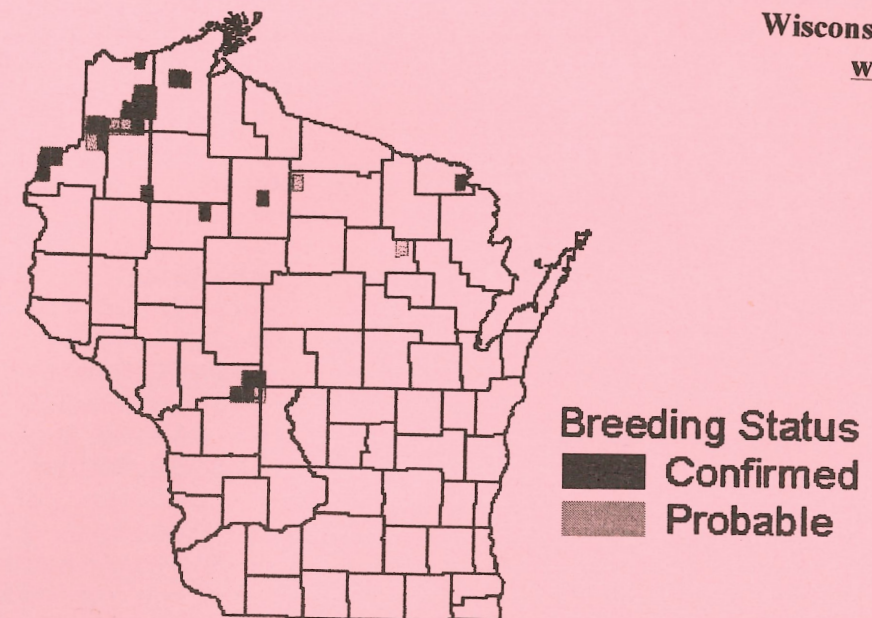
According to the Atlas map, the major sharptail breeding range is in the Northwest Pine Barrens, from Burnett County to Bayfield County. This would include the Crex Meadows, Namekagon Barrens, Douglas County, and Moquah Barrens Wildlife Areas plus the large clearcuts in public and industrial forests caused by the recent jack pine budworm outbreak.

The central Wisconsin sharptail population is represented on the map as well as the Riley Lake Wildlife Area on the Chequamegon National Forest in central Price County and the few birds found on the Spread Eagle Barrens in Florence County. Missing are sharptails found in the Pershing Wildlife Area in western Taylor County, the Kimberly-Clark Wildlife Area in western Price County, and possible birds in the Powell Marsh in western Vilas County and Thunder Lake Marsh in Oneida County.

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas
wbb@uwgb.edu



According to the Atlas map, there apparently are remnant populations of sharptails in Bayfield County near Oulu, in Washburn County near Birchwood, in Rusk County north of Glen Flora, in Langlade County near Lily, and in Oneida County west of Minocqua.

I believe an annual statewide census of breeding sharp-tailed grouse (number of dancing grounds and dancing males) can be developed by using the records from the Breeding Bird Atlas, other WSO records, and federal and state breeding bird surveys as a starting point. There are obvious benefits derived from an annual sharptail census including the establishment of the number of hunting permits available.

In my opinion, valuable information about breeding sharp-tailed grouse distribution and numbers was gained from the Breeding Bird Atlas. The WSGS also formed a partnership with the WSO. Eventually, a book will be written giving a map and a narrative for each breeding bird species recorded in the Atlas project. The WSGS will be given credit for financially sponsoring the sharp-tailed grouse.

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society Financial Statement
1/1/99 through 12/31/99

Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/98-----	\$2,678.83
Certificate of Deposits as of 12/31/98-----	\$1,691.04
Petty cash balance as of 12/31/98-----	\$12.85
<u>Total cash assets as of 12/31/98-----</u>	<u>\$4,382.72</u>

INCOME:

Memberships - 135 regular @ \$10-----	\$1,350.00
27 supporting @ \$25-----	\$675.00
2 contributing @ \$50-----	\$100.00
4 sustaining @ \$100-----	\$400.00
<u>Total Memberships-----</u>	<u>\$2,525.00</u>
Sales - 39 Stickers @ \$1.50-----	\$58.50
11 Caps @ \$14-----	\$154.00
4 Caps @ \$10-----	\$40.00
1 Patch @ \$3.50-----	\$3.50
2 Patches @ \$3-----	\$6.00
<u>Total Sales-----</u>	<u>\$262.00</u>
Interest on Checking Account-----	\$42.39
Interest on Certificates of Deposit-----	\$94.17
Art Raffle-----	\$975.00
Annual meeting-----	\$25.00
Donations-----	\$6.44
<u>Total Income-----</u>	<u>\$3,930.00</u>

EXPENDITURES:

Projects - Support of UWSP Sharptail Research---	\$1,205
DU Great Outdoor Festival-----	\$305
Support of Pine Barrens Workshop-----	\$200
WSO Breeding Bird Atlas-----	\$100
(fifth and final annual gift)	
<u>Wisconsin Stewardship Network-----</u>	<u>\$50</u>
Total Projects-----	\$1,860.00
Newsletter - Printing-----	\$500.00
Postage-----	\$181.74
<u>Office supplies-----</u>	<u>\$1.54</u>
Total Membership Service-----	\$683.28
500 decals-----	\$314.72
Total Expenditures-----	\$2,858.28

Checkbook Balance as of 12/31/99-----	\$3,639.07
Certificates of Deposit as of 12/31/99-----	\$1,785.21
Petty Cash Balance as of 12/31/99-----	\$30.84
<hr/>	
Total Cash Assets as of 12/31/99-----	\$5,455.12

Submitted by James O. Evrard, Sec./Treas., 1/11/00.
WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

Saturday and Sunday, April 29 and 30, 2000
St. Croix Inn, Solon Springs, Wisconsin

The WSGS invites you and your spouse, partner, son, daughter, or friend to our annual meeting.

Following our business meeting that begins at 1 pm. and ends at 4 pm. on Saturday afternoon, we will again enjoy a broiled-over-hardwood coals steak dinner in the historic field trial building on the Douglas County Wildlife Area. Our dinner speaker will be Dr. Neal Niemuth and/or Dr. Tim Connolly who will discuss the sharp-tailed grouse research they conducted during the past two years and which we partially funded.

Very early on Sunday morning, we will again census the sharp-tailed grouse in the Northwest Pine Barrens. Census teams will be assigned to specific areas to count male sharptails on their dancing grounds in the early morning hours. These counts will be used to determine the numbers of sharptails in the area and ultimately the number of sharptail hunting permits available in the fall. Following the census, we will return to the St. Croix Inn Center for a census debriefing/brunch beginning at 9:00 am. The meeting ends following brunch.

Registration Deadline is April 21, 2000. The registration fee of \$25 includes refreshments, dinner on Saturday evening, brunch on Sunday morning, and registration materials. Payment must be made prior to the registration deadline.

Lodging is available at the St. Croix Inn (715)378-4444. Please make your own reservations. A block of rooms has been reserved for the meeting.

For more information, contact Jim Evrard (715) 463-2446

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REGISTRATION - 2000 WSGS ANNUAL MEETING

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Daytime Phone: (____) _____ - _____

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Make check/money order (\$25) payable to: Wisconsin Sharp-tailed
Grouse Society

Send form and payment to: Jim Evrard, WSGS
630 N. Pine St.
Grantsburg, WI 54840

Wild

NOTES *from the National Wildlife Refuge System*

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge

Spring 2000

Fire Season 2000 In Central Wisconsin



Moderate temperatures in January and February and a minimal amount of precipitation this winter season has brought an early fire season to the Necedah area. Normally we do not see this condition until early April. The Necedah National Wildlife Refuge is preparing to burn over 2000 acres of refuge lands for the enhancement of wildlife habitat for upland game animals, waterfowl, and endangered species. The periodic burning of savanna and grasslands reduces encroaching vegetation such as oak sprouts and willow. It encourages the growth of more desirable species like blueberry, raspberry, and wild lupine, which is a plant necessary for the survival of the endangered Karner blue butterfly. It also reduces the build-up of dead wood, leaves, and grass that can lead to severe wildfires like the 1988 Yellowstone fires.

All prescribed burns are carried out by highly trained and qualified personnel under very exacting plans. No burn will take place unless it meets the prescription for each unit. A prescription defines the air temperature, fuel moisture, wind direction and velocity, soil moisture, relative humidity, and several other environmental factors under which a prescribed burn may be ignited. This minimizes the chance the fire will escape the unit boundaries and that the fire will have the desired effect on the plant community. Personnel, public safety and wildfire prevention are the top priorities of any Refuge burn project.



Necedah is located in what fire managers call a high risk fire area. This is caused by dry, sandy soil which promotes the growth of jackpine and light, fluffy grasses and shrubs that carry fire well.

For these reasons, homeowners and vacationers in Central Wisconsin area should take added precautions in constructing their homes and the activities they pursue. The Department of Natural Resources has strict restrictions on open outdoor burning. In most areas outside the limits of towns or villages, permits must be obtained before any burning is done. Any time there is no snow covering most of the ground, burning permits are required.

Property owners can take several precautions to increase the chances of saving their homes and structures in the event that a wildfire passes through their area. The greatest danger comes from a "crown fire" in which the fire is rapidly passing from crown to crown in the tops of trees. To reduce the risk of crown fire damage, reduce the number of trees, particularly pine, within at least 200 feet of any structures. Keep grass and other shrub type vegetation cut short to reduce the chance of a grass fire from coming in contact with structures. Make sure there is adequate clearance on the drive leading to the property for fire fighting vehicles to pass. Stockpile firewood or any other combustible material away from buildings. Yard sanitation is a good defense against fire. The less cluttered a yard is, the less there is to ignite and burn to cause problems for structures and fire fighters. Use only fire resistant materials when constructing roofs and siding and comply with all building codes. Remember that the devastating fires last fall in the residential areas of Los Angeles can occur in the jackpine flats of Juneau County. More information about protecting yourself from wildland fire can be obtained by contacting your local fire warden or a Department of Natural Resources field office.

CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR WISCONSIN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY

David Biegel

I live in the country near Marshall, Wisconsin which is about 15 miles east of Madison. I am married, have two grown children and one grandchild who lives with us. We have a second home in northwest Wisconsin near Gordon on the St. Croix Flowage.

Occupation: Program Director/Instructor at Madison Area Technical College for 26 years.

Other duties and interests: Board Chair of a Credit Union, President of the Prairie Dartball League, serve on the Education Committee for both the Association of Diesel Specialist's and the Engine and Equipment Training Council. Do consultant work for the American Council on Education evaluating distant learning, credit by examination, military experience and military training programs.

Memberships: Wisconsin Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society, North American Hunting Club, Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, National Rifle Association Life member, National Association of Service Managers, Society of Automotive Engineers, Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association, Equipment Maintenance Council and the American Trucking Association Maintenance Council.

Hobbies: The great outdoors, viewing wildlife in their natural habitat, travel, hunting, fishing, ATV riding, woodworking and spending time in the Wisconsin northern forests.

Paul Hayes

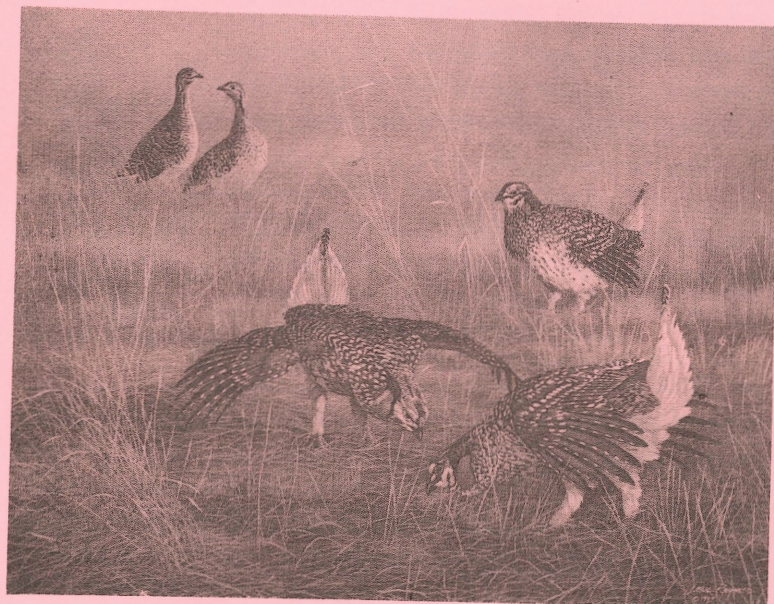
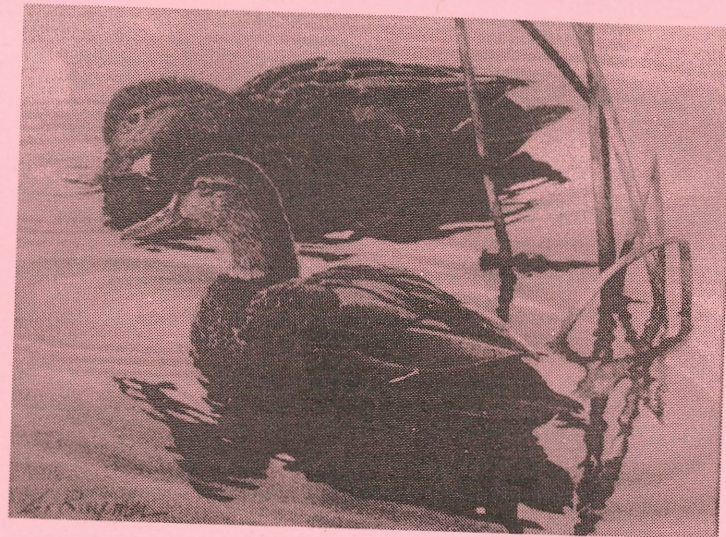
Paul Hayes has been a member of the WSGS for three years. He has an MS in Biology from St. Mary's of Minnesota and has been a high school teacher for over 30 years. Paul hunts (mostly upland birds) and fishes (mostly trout) all across Wisconsin. He is an active member of Blackhawk Trout Unlimited and the nature conservancy. He is also a member of NWTF, Wisconsin Environmental Decade, RGS and a number of local rod and gun clubs. Paul has two grown children and lives with his wife Bernadette in Kenosha County and spends most of the summer at this tree farm in Vernon county.

Jeff Flatness

After some encouragement by Tom Ziegeweid, I have decided to run for a board position with the Wisconsin Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society. I am 34 years old and live with my wife and two children near Eau Claire, WI. I have a Master of Science degree from UW-Eau Claire and am currently employed as an Industrial Hygienist at ESA 10 in Chippewa Falls. I am an avid hunter, fisherman, wilderness camper, canoeist and most anything else that will keep me outdoors. I am a member of the NRA, Ducks Unlimited, Chippewa Valley Outdoor Resource Alliance and am a board member of the Chippewa Valley chapter of Pheasants Forever. Although my family and activities keep me very busy, I believe that I must do what I can to maintain or enhance the things that have given me so much.

Bob Dreis

Bob Dreis is a resident of Spooner, and has had a life long interest in sharptails and sharptail habitat. Bob is a retired wildlife biologist, and after a career with the Wisconsin DNR spent some time working as a consultant biologist and for the Ruffed Grouse Society. Bob is a charter member of WSGS and has been a board member.



SIXTH ANNUAL ART RAFFLE

This year's special offering is an original acrylic by Louis Raymer. This original of a pair of black ducks was submitted for the Minnesota State Waterfowl Stamp. While it was not selected, it is a striking work of art.

The first print is Sharptails on the Rise by Owen Gromme. This print was published nearly twenty years ago, but we picked this copy up in the secondary market. Those of you who know art recognize Gromme as the most legendary of Wisconsin wildlife artists.

Again this year we are able to offer Spring Dance at Crex by Louis Raymer. Thanks to Friends of Crex for donating this print. (If you're not a member of Friends of Crex, consider joining them.) There are very few sharptail prints out there and this is one of the best.

Ticket Prices – Raffle ticket prices are: 1 ticket for \$5.00, 3 tickets for \$10.00 or 10 tickets for \$25.00. Please legibly write your name and the name of the ticket purchaser, if different, on each of the stubs sold. If you cannot attend the meeting, please send the tickets and payment to WSGS, Box 1115, Cumberland, WI 54829. Those who attend can bring stubs and money to the spring meeting. You need not be present to win. If you're a good sales person and need more tickets, contact Dave Evenson, 715-822-5421. Buy a bunch, it's for a good cause!

BALLOT – WSGS BOARD (Vote for 2 Members)

_____ David Biegel

☒ Bob Dreis

_____ Jeff Flatness

☒ Paul Hayes

_____ write-in

Vote
MAIL IN OR BRING TO ANNUAL MEETING

PLEASE CHECK THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL BELOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE PAID UP

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

(Annual Dues \$10.00)

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Zip: _____
Phone: _____

Enclosed: \$ _____ dues
Regular-\$10 Supporting \$25
Contributing \$50 Sustaining \$100
Sponsor \$200

Dues are fully tax deductible

Thank you for your continued support,
Board of Directors

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO AND RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO: WISCONSIN SHARP-
TAILED GROUSE SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 1115, CUMBERLAND WI 54829

Volunteer Activities

____ Board of Directors Address
____ Newsletter Writing
____ Bird Census Work
____ Publicity
____ Education
____ Fund Raising

____ Four color cloth patch \$3.50
with postage
____ WSGS logo window sticker \$1.50
With postage
____ Total amount enclosed

CAP 2

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